



ALAMEDA COUNTY
CONGESTION MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Memorandum

*July 7, 2009
Agenda Item 4.7*

DATE: June 29, 2009
TO: ACTAC
FROM: Vivek Bhat, Associate Transportation Engineer
RE: Alameda County CMA Freeway Soundwall Policy:
Proposed Revisions

Action Requested

ACTAC is requested to provide input on proposed revisions to the Alameda County CMA Freeway Soundwall Policy (Policy).

Next Steps

The Policy, with ACTAC comments, is proposed to be presented to the committees and CMA Board in September.

Discussion

The Alameda County CMA Freeway Soundwall Policy was adopted by the CMA Board in August 2002. New soundwall requests within Alameda County are processed by the guidelines established in the Policy.

At the October 2008 ACTAC and PPC meetings, CMA staff with the assistance of noise consultants from Illingworth & Rodkin Inc., presented a paper that addressed additional information on soundwalls and alternative freeway noise abatement techniques.

Staff is proposing revisions to the Policy based on the information in the paper as well as comments received from ACTAC and the PPC, including:

- Discuss effect of perceived alternative noise abatement concepts. For example, the effect of a line of trees to abate noise is negligible.
- Alternative pavement surfaces / treatments such as open graded asphalt concrete (OGAC or Rubberized OGAC) is not listed in the Federal Highway Traffic Noise Regulations (23 CFR 772) as a noise abatement measure for which Federal funding may be used. The CMA may request alternative pavement surfaces / treatments to be used on projects within Alameda County. Alternative pavement surfaces / treatments are not proposed to replace soundwalls though.

- CMA program proposes to continue to focus on the Policy on the abatement of Freeway noise (as compared to local arterial or other sources of noise).

The CMA also received comments from the Grand Lake Traffic Calming Committee (GLTCC) requesting to:

- Upgrade Public schools to Priority 1 facilities in the policy. Schools are included in the current policy but are ranked as Priority 2 projects and
- Include Public Parks as Priority 1 facilities in the policy. Parks are not included in the current policy.

ACTAC is requested to provide input on the proposed revisions and comments. A revised draft policy will be presented at the September 2009 meetings.

Attachment

900 Paramount Road
Oakland CA 94610
December 31, 2008

Mr. Vivek Bhat
Associate Transportation Engineer
Alameda County CMA
1333 Broadway Suite 220
Oakland CA 94612

Subject: I-580 and its Impact on Oakland

Dear Mr. Bhat:

For several years the Grand Lake Traffic Calming Committee (GLTCC) has been working to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists in the Lakeshore/Grand Avenue area. In the process we've come to realize that I-580 has severely damaged Oakland in many significant ways. The purpose of this letter is to call your attention to one of the problems created by I-580 that is in particular need of redress, and to request your assistance in finding an appropriate solution to the problem.

Between Wesley and Van Buren Streets, I-580 passes two public parks and the Lakeview Elementary School. Both the parks and the school are adversely affected by constant noise pollution emanating from the freeway. The GLTCC feels strongly that the parklands and the school should be protected by appropriately-designed sound walls.

Effect of I-580 on the School: In considering ways of mitigating this problem we have reviewed both CMA Resolution 02-04 and Matt Todd's letter to Deborah Edgerly, dated October 10, 2005, in which he indicated that a sound wall between Lakeshore and Grand was not recommended because "parks and commercial buildings are not a 1st or 2nd Tier Priority". Yet Resolution 02-04 specifically includes "school buildings along freeways" as Priority 2 facilities. The Lakeview Elementary School is not a commercial building, it is a school. Moreover, it is a school located just 40 feet from I-580 and at the same level as I-580 whose playgrounds as well as a number of classrooms on hot days are constantly exposed to the roar of the freeway. School teachers and students need protection from excessive noise just as much as residents do.

Effect of I-580 on the Park: Between Lakeshore and Grand Avenues public parks are located immediately to the north and south of the freeway. These parklands are severely impacted by the constant noise of the high speed traffic traveling along the I-580 viaduct, a particular irritant to those attempting to enjoy the park to the north of the freeway. Yet in our review of Resolution 02-04, we found no reference to public parks. It is neither logical nor appropriate to relegate public parks to a category that automatically excludes them from sound wall consideration. Parks unprotected by sound walls that lie immediately adjacent to freeways simply do not read to potential users as "parks"....at least in any meaningful sense of the word.

Conclusion: It is our understanding that Caltrans, in cooperation with MTC, ACTA and ACTIA, is currently immersed in an active program to expand Alameda County's system of freeways through the addition of HOT lanes, removal of "bottlenecks" and reconfiguration of interchanges. It is not clear how this can be happening in the face of the obvious need to clean up past mistakes such as subjecting schools and public parks to excessive noise. Before further expanding Bay Area freeways Caltrans should make certain that what it has already built meets reasonable environmental standards.

In light of the above, we request that the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency:

a.) Revise CMA Resolution 02-04 to include all public parks and as well as all schools as Priority 1 elements,

b.) Adopt an official policy calling for Caltrans, MTC and the County funding agencies to appropriately mitigate the damage their existing freeways are doing to Priority 1 and 2 elements before spending capital on freeway expansion,

c.) Adopt an official policy calling for the installation of appropriate sound walls along I-580 between Wesley and Van Buren Streets as a Priority 1 Alameda County CMA project.

We have some specific ideas on how particular types of sound walls could be used to address the above-indicated problems and look forward to working with you on this important task.

Sincerely yours,

Gerald Cauthen PE,
Chair, Grand Lake Traffic Calming Committee

cc Honorable Sandre Swanson
Honorable Pat Kernighan